

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 BANGKOK 6789

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR AMGT XE XP
SUBJECT: PARM - ANNUAL POLICY AND RESOURCE ASSESSMENT - PART 1

REF: A) STATE 038356, B) STATE 038338, C) STATE 043659,
D) CERP 0001

SUMMARY: US-THAI RELATIONS ARE UNDERGOING A STEADY BUT
SUBSTANTIAL TRANSFORMATION FROM THE EXTREMELY CLOSE,
NEAR-IDENTITY OF VIEWS WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE PAST 25
YEARS, TO A MORE CONVENTIONAL RELATIONSHIP. ALTHOUGH
THAILAND IS OF MUCH LESS DIRECT STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO
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THE UNITED STATES SINCE THE END OF THE INDO-CHINA WAR,
IT REMAINS A LINK IN THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY OF
SOUTHEAST ASIA, OR, AT LEAST, IS PERCEIVED THAT WAY
BY OTHER SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES. WE RETAIN
IMPORTANT, THOUGH LIMITED, ACCESS RIGHTS IN THAILAND,
AND THAILAND IS A NATION WITH WHICH WE SEEK TO
CONTINUE TO ENJOY FRIENDLY RELATIONS IN ORDER TO

PURSUE OUR BROAD GLOBAL OBJECTIVES OF BOTH BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL NATURE. MORE DIRECTLY, THAILAND IS A FREE MARKET ECONOMY IN WHICH THE PROMOTION OF US TRADE AND INVESTMENT IS WELCOME. WE HAVE A CONTINUING INTEREST IN REDUCING THE FLOW OF NARCOTICS FROM THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE AREA TO THE US, WHICH REQUIRES THAI COOPERATION AND SUPPORT. WE ALSO RETAIN A HUMANITARIAN INTEREST IN THE WELFARE OF THE REFUGEES FLEEING INDO-CHINA--WHOM THE THAI HAVE WELCOMED MORE GENEROUSLY THAN THEIR NEIGHBORS--FOR WHICH THAI COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE REMAIN IMPORTANT. END SUMMARY.

A. US INTERESTS

1. CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THAILAND WHICH LIES IN A STRATEGIC POSITION BETWEEN A BASICALLY ANTI-US, COMMUNIST-RULED INDO-CHINA AND THE BASICALLY PRO-US, NON-COMMUNIST-SOUTHEAST ASIAN STATES WHICH, IN TURN, LIE ASTRIDE SHIPPING ROUTES OF IMPORTANCE TO THE US AND ITS ALLIES, ESPECIALLY JAPAN.

2. ACCESS TO THAILAND AS AN ESSENTIALLY SELF-SUFFICIENT STATE WITH WHICH THE UNITED STATES IS ABLE TO DISCUSS A BROAD RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES AND CAN EXPECT TO RECEIVE RATIONAL RESPONSES.

3. STATUS OF THAILAND AS ONE OF THE MAJOR CONDUITS OF ILLICIT NARCOTICS, SOME OF WHICH EVENTUALLY FIND THEIR

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WAY TO THE US.

4. ACCESS TO CERTAIN THAI MILITARY BASES WHICH ARE SUPPORTIVE OF OUR BROADER INTERESTS IN THE REGION.

5. ACCESS TO THAILAND, AN IMPORTANT TRADING PARTNER FOR THE US, ONE THAT WELCOMES US INVESTMENT, AND IS A MAJOR PRODUCER OF IMPORTANT RAW MATERIALS - RUBBER, TIN AND SUGAR, AND MANY OTHERS.

6. WELFARE OF REFUGEES FLEEING INDO-CHINA WHOM THAILAND CONTINUES TO ACCEPT AND ASSIST.

B. OVERVIEW

1. I BELIEVE THAT THERE CONTINUES TO EXIST A CONSIDERABLE RESERVOIR OF GOOD WILL IN THAILAND FOR THE US, BORN OF A LONG HISTORY OF FRIENDLY, AND AT TIMES, VERY CLOSE RELATIONS. THIS GOOD WILL IS TEMPERED AT PRESENT

BY A FEELING OF CONCERN FOR THAILAND'S FUTURE AND A FEAR THAT THE US IS ABANDONING ITS OLD FRIEND AND ALLY IN ORDER TO BUILD NEW RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST STATES OF INDO-CHINA. THE RTG SUSPECTS THE INTENTIONS OF ITS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS. HENCE, WHILE SOME SENIOR THAI LEADERS VIEW US EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH VIET-NAM AS SUPPORTIVE OF THAI EFFORTS ALONG THE SAME LINE, THERE IS A TENDENCY IN THAILAND TO SEE SUCH EFFORTS AS EVIDENCE THAT THE US IS NOW MORE INTERESTED IN ITS FORMER ENEMIES THAN IN ITS FRIENDS. THIS FEELING IS ACCENTUATED BY THE STRONG ANTI-COMMUNIST ORIENTATION OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

2. IN REACTION TO THIS PERCEIVED INCREASED THREAT FROM HER COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS, THAILAND HAS ATTEMPTED TO TIGHTEN ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS NON-COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS AND COLLEAGUES IN ASEAN AND WITH THE US. IN THIS CONTEXT
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THAILAND CLINGS TO THE HOPE THAT THE US WILL KEEP IN FULL ITS COMMITMENT UNDER THE MANILA PACT AND THE RUSK-THANAT JOINT COMMUNIQUE, ALTHOUGH THEIR LEADERS ARE SKEPTICAL OF US INTENTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MID-1970'S. ON THE OTHER HAND THAILAND, IN DEFERENCE TO THE GEOPOLITICAL REALITIES OF THE SITUATION, CONTINUES TO MAKE CAUTIOUS MOVES TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH HER COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS.

3. I FEEL CERTAIN THAT, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, THE THAI MILITARY WILL CONTINUE TO INFLUENCE THE POLITICAL ORIENTATION IN THAILAND AND THE DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY'S FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE NEAR FUTURE. LEADERS MAY CHANGE, BUT ANY FORESEEABLE CHANGES ARE LIKELY TO BRING POWER OTHER MILITARY LEADERS AND THEIR CIVILIAN ALLIES WITH A SIMILAR POLICY OUTLOOK. THEREFORE, I DO NOT ANTICIPATE ANY EARLY, MAJOR CHANGE IN GENERAL THAI POLICY, UNLESS THERE IS SOME RADICAL UPHEAVAL IN THE COUNTRY WHICH APPEARS UNLIKELY IN THE PRESENT SITUATION. THIS POINT WAS BROUGHT HOME FORCEFULLY DURING THE ABORTIVE COUP D'ETAT OF MARCH 26. THIS OPERATION WAS ILL-CONCEIVED AND ILL-PLANNED, WITH INADEQUATE FORCES COMMITTED TO THE COUP TO ENSURE ITS SUCCESS. WE ASSUME THAT GEN CHALAT, THE COUP LEADER, ANTICIPATED THAT OTHERS WOULD JOIN HIM, AN EXPECTATION THAT WAS NOT RPT NOT BORNE OUT BY EVENTS. EVEN IF THIS COUP HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL, AND THERE HAD BEEN MAJOR CHANGES IN THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT, WE BELIEVE THAT ITS GENERAL POLICY ORIENTATION WOULD NOT HAVE CHANGED. ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE OVER THE RADIO BY THE COUP GROUP UNDERLINED ITS COMMITMENT TO ESSENTIALLY THE SAME INSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES AS

THE PRESENT RTG.

4. THE POSITION OF THE MILITARY AND CIVILAIN LEADERS
PRESENTLY IN CONTROL OF THE REINS OF POWER IS NOT ALL ABSOLUTELY
SECURE. FUTURE INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLES WITHIN THE
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MILITARY GROUP COULD OCCUR AND, IF THEY DO, WOULD AFFECT THE
COMPOSITION OF THE CABINETS OR LEAD TO A COMPLETE MILITARY
ASSUMPTION OF POWER.

5. THE COMMUNIST INSURGENCY IN THAILAND CONTINUES
TO GROW AT A SLOW BUT STEADY RATE. THE MAJORITY VIEW
WITHIN THE MISSION IS THAT THE RTG WILL BE ABLE TO
CONTAIN THE INSURGENCY, WHICH WILL NOT POST
A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE STABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT OR
THE NATION IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS AT LEAST, UNLESS THERE
IS ACUTE POLITICAL INSTABILITY WITHIN THE RTG IN BANGKOK.
ECONOMICALLY, THAILAND HAS A SOUND ECONOMY AND BALANCE OF
PAYMENTS, AND CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH. WHAT
IS LACKING AT PRESENT IS ASSURANCE OF POLITICAL STABILITY
AND A LEADERSHIP WITH A BORAD BASE OF NATIONAL SUPPORT.
DESPITE THE TRADITIONAL CORRUPTION, INDOLENCE, AND FAVORITISM
WHICH SURROUNDS MUCH GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITY, THERE ARE MANY OTHER
ASPECTS OF THAI SOCIETY, SUCH AS NATIONAL HOMOGENEITY, THE
MONARCHY AND BUDDHISM WHICH PROVIDES THE COUNTRY WITH A
GOOD DEAL OF STABILITY.

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6. VALIDITY OF US POLICY. SINCE THE FALL OF SAIGON AND PHNOM PENH, THE US HAS NOT HAD A WELL DEFINED POLICY TOWARD THAILAND IN PARTICULAR OR SOUTHEAST ASIA IN GENERAL. INSTEAD, THE US HAS REACTED TO A NEW AND RAPIDLY-CHANGING SITUATION. THIS LACK OF A FULLY-DEFINED POLICY, HOWEVER, HAS NOT HURT US INTERESTS IN THAILAND, AS DEFINED ABOVE, TO ANY SERIOUS EXTENT. THOUGH THE ROAD HAS AT TIMES BEEN BUMPY, I BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE EFFECTIVELY ADJUSTED TO THE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH PREVAIL IN THAILAND AND IN THE REGION. WE HAVE LOWERED OUR PROFILE AND PRESENCE TO ACCOMMODATE A CONCEPT OF DRASTICALLY REDUCED US INTERESTS IN
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THE REGION, AND ARE, THEREFORE, IN A GOOD POSITION TO PURSUE THE INTERESTS ENUMERATED ABOVE.

7. THERE IS ONE ASPECT OF OUR PRESENT POLICY THAT WE SHOULD CAREFULLY REVIEW: OUR SECURITY COMMITMENTS TO THAILAND UNDER THE MANILA TREATY OF 1954 AND THE RUSK-THANAT JOINT STATEMENT OF MARCH 7, 1972. UNDER PRESENT POLICY WE HAVE REITERATED PUBLICLY THE US INTENTION TO HONOR THESE COMMITMENTS. A CLOSE LOOK AT THESE OBLIGATIONS SHOWS THAT OUR RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE MANILA TREATY COMMIT THE US TO "ACT TO MEET THE COMMON DANGER IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES" IN THE EVENT OF AN ARMED ATTACK AGAINST ONE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY (SUCH AS THAILAND). IF THE TERRITORY, SOVEREIGNTH OF POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF THAILAND ARE THREATENED IN ANY WAY OTHER THAN BY ARMED ATTACK, OUR OBLIGATION IS TO CONSULT ON MEASURES TO BE TAKEN FOR THE COMMON DEFENSE. THE THAI WOULD BE LIKELY TO REGARD A CONVENTIONAL ARMED ATTACK BY VIET-NAM AS INVOLVING THE FIRST SET OF OBLIGATIONS SET FORTH ABOVE. THEY WOULD BE LIKELY TO REGARD AN INTENSIFICATION OF THE COMMUNIST DIRECTED INSURGENCY IN THAILAND, BEYOND THE ABILITY

OF THE RTG TO HANDLE WITH ITS OWN RESOURCES, AS INVOLVING THE SECOND SET OF OBLIGATIONS.

8. THE RUSK-THANAT JOINT STATEMENT EXPRESSED THE VIEW "THAT THE US REGARDS THE PRESERVATION OF THE INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY OF THAILAND AS VITAL TO THE NATIONAL INTEREST OF THE US AND WORLD PEACE. (THE SECRETARY OF STATE) EXPRESSED THE FIRM INTENTION OF THE US TO AID THAILAND, ITS ALLY AND HISTORIC FRIEND, IN RESISTING COMMUNIST AGGRESSION AND SUBVERSION." THIS STATEMENT GOES EVEN FURTHER THAN THE MANILA TREATY AND COULD INVOLVE THE US IN THAILAND IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD GO WELL BEYOND THE USG ABILITY TO DELIVER. CONSTANT REITERATION OF A COMMITMENT THE US WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO FULFILL WOULD
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DAMAGE THE CREDIBILITY OF US COMMITMENTS IN THAILAND AND ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD.

9. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO PREDICT HOW THE THAI WOULD SEEK TO ASSURE THEIR SECURITY ONCE THE MANILA TREATY IS CANCELLED OR SET ASIDE. HOWEVER, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THAILAND'S ASEAN PARTNERS, ACTING JOINTLY OR ON A BILATERAL BASIS, MIGHT BE PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEFENSE OF THAILAND. MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN PROMISED THAT MALAYSIA WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEFENSE OF THAILAND IN CASE OF NEED DURING HIS VISIT TO BANGKOK IN MARCH 1977, AND SENIOR INDONESIAN MILITARY LEADERS HAVE INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO SEND TROOPS TO THAILAND TO ASSIST IN ITS DEFENSE. THE COMMUNIST STATES OF INDO-CHINA, WHICH POTENTIALLY PRESENT THE MOST DIRECT THREAT TO THE INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THAILAND, MIGHT BE DETERRED IN UNDERTAKING AN ASSAULT ON THAILAND, EITHER THROUGH A CONVENTIONAL ATTACK OR THROUGH PROVIDING MASSIVE SUPPORT TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THAILAND, IF THEY WERE CONVINCED THAT THEY WOULD FACE THE COMBINED OPPOSITION OF ASEAN. THE ASEAN COUNTRIES, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, ARE NOT AT PRESENT A MILITARY MATCH TO THE FORCES OF VIET-NAM, BUT THEY COULD CONCEIVABLY GENERATE SOME SUPPORT AT THE UN AND WITHIN THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT.

C. OBJECTIVES

1. TO COMPLETE THE TRANSITION FROM A CLOSE, ALMOST SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP TO A MORE CONVENTIONAL BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WHICH MORE NEARLY REFLECTS OUR INTERESTS.

2. TO SEE THAILAND CONTINUE TO DEVELOP AND PROSPER AS AN INDEPENDENT, NON-COMMUNIST STATE CAPABLE OF DEFENDING ITSELF AGAINST THE COMMUNIST INSURGENCY AND HAVING A

CREDIBLE DETERRENT AGAINST EXTERNAL MEDDLING.

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3. TO REDUCE THE FLOW OF NARCOTICS FROM THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE AREA TO THE US.

4. TO PROMOTE US ECONOMIC AND INVESTMENT INTERESTS IN THAILAND.

5. TO ASSURE THE THAI THAT THE US INTENDS TO PLAY AN ACTIVE AND INTERESTED ROLE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA; THAT WE WILL BE MINDFUL OF OUR TRADITIONAL FRIENDS' CONCERNS IN THE PROCESS OF NORMALIZING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR FORMER ADVERSARIES; AND THAT WE ARE SUPPORTIVE OF AND ENCOURAGE REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION.

6. TO RETAIN MILITARY ACCESS IN THE FORM OF MILITARY LOGISTIC AND INTELLIGENCE FLIGHTS, NAVAL SHIP VISITS, AND FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE CONTINGENCIES.

7. TO ENSURE THAT THE THAI GOVERNMENT (PRESENT AND FUTURE) UNDERSTANDS OUR POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS.

8. TO ENSURE THAT WE AND THE THAI GOVERNMENT UNDERSTAND OUR COMMITMENTS UNDER THE MANILA PACT AND THE RUSK-THANAT JOINT STATEMENT.

9. TO ASSIST THE THAI IN HANDLING REFUGEES FLEEING FROM INDO-CHINA.

D. COURSES OF ACTION

1. MAINTAIN A CLOSE, CONTINUING DIALOGUE WITH THE THAI ON OUR VIEWS AND POLICIES RELATED TO NEIGHBORING AREAS IN ORDER TO FOSTER COMMON INTERESTS AND TO ENCOURAGE THAI COOPERATION WITH OTHER SEA GOVERNMENTS AND WITH US PROGRAMS. IN PARTICULAR CONSULT CLOSELY WITH THAILAND ON US VIEWS AND POLICIES TOWARD INDO-CHINA AND ESPECIALLY REGARDING PLANNED US INITIATIVE VIS-A-VIS VIET-NAM.

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FOLLOW A BALANCED REGIONAL STRATEGY, BEING CAREFUL NOT TO FOSTER A THAI PERCEPTION THAT THE US IS TREATING FORMER ENEMIES MORE FAVORABLE THAN TRADITIONAL FRIENDS AND ALLIES SUCH AS THAILAND.

2. IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD THE MAIN COURSE OF ACTION MUST CONTINUE TO BE THE PROMOTION OF US PRIVATE TRADE AND INVESMENT. IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS, RANKED BY IMPORTANCE, US LIBERALIZATION POLICIES WOULD CONTRIBUTE MOST TO IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THAILAND.

A GREATER THAI ACCESS TO US ECONOMY THROUGH THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN ORDER TO REDRESS AN ADVERSE BALANCE OF BILATERAL TRADE (ROUGHLY TWO TO ONE AT PRESENT.)

B MINIMIZE PL-480 SALES IN AREAS OF TRADITIONAL THAI MARKETS AND LIBERALIZE TEXTILE QUOTAS ON THAI EXPORTS TO THE US.

C PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS TO STABILIZE RUBBER AND TIN PRICES.

D CONTINUE TO SUPPORT WELL-CONCEIVED WORLD BANK AND ADB LENDING PROGRAMS. ATTEMPT TO REVITALIZE UNDP AND UN INDEPENDENT AGENCY PROGRAMS, REDIRECTING THEM TO MEET THE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES OF REDUCING RURAL POVERTY.

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E CONSIDER HIGH PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROPOSALS WITH DUE REGARD TO PROJECTS INVOLVING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO THAI RURAL DEVELOPMENT BOTTLENECKS. CONTINUE A MODERATE BILATERAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM RESPONDING TO THAI REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE WHICH WILL SERVE OUR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES.

F ENCOURAGE THAI COOPERATION AND PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROUPINGS SUCH AS ASEAN, ESCAP, MEKONG DEVELOPMENT, ADB, ETC.

3. ASSIST THE RTG EFFORTS TO SUPPRESS THE NARCOTICS
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TRADE AND REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF OPIUM GROWN IN THAILAND.

4. CONTINUE TO PROVIDE SECURITY ASSISTANCE IN ONE FORM OR OTHER AT ESSENTIALLY FY 77 LEVELS. SEEK TO OBTAIN CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL FOR THE CONTINUANCE OF A JUSMAG IN THAILAND WHICH WILL ASSURE EFFECTIVE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT CONSISTENT WITH THE CAPABILITIES OF THE RTARF.

5. DISCREETLY ADVISE THE THAI GOVERNMENT OF US CONCERNS ON HUMAN RIGHTS WHERE APPROPRIATE, DETAILING THE PROBABLE EFFECTS ON US PROGRAMS IN THAILAND.

6. PURSUE A VIGOROUS INFORMATION AND CULTURAL PROGRAM DESIGNED TO PROMOTE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE US IN ALL ITS DIMENSIONS, TO UNDERLINE OUR SYMPATHETIC ATTITUDE TOWARD CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT AND OUR INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS.

7. CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO THE UNHCR AT A LEVEL APPROPRIATE TO THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN THAILAND WHO HAVE FLED FROM INDOCHINA SINCE 1975 AND TO ACCEPT ENTRY INTO THE US OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN THAILAND AT THE FY 1976-77 LEVEL, AT LEAST FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

8. MAINTAIN THE PEACE CORPS PROGRAM AT CURRENT LEVELS, IF SO DESIRED BY THE RTG.

9. IN MUCH OF THE ABOVE OTHER AGENCIES WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY A PROMINENT ROLE IN OUR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVES HERE. DEA, USOM AND AGRICULTURE FOR DRUG

SUPPRESSEION AND CROP SUBSTITUTION; USOM AND PEACE CORPS
FOR DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE; JUSMAG FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE;
AND USIS TO SUPPORT THE OBJECTIVES AND PROGRAMS
OF THESE AGENCIES AS WELL AS OUR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC
INTERESTS.

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